

## ***Harpswell Community Garden Report***

November 18, 2013

### **Summary of 2013 Garden Program Activities:**

Infrastructure: Most infrastructure projects were completed in the prior year. In the Spring, Volunteers completed the deer proof fence and installed the solar panel to provide electric charge. In the early Fall a volunteer repaired the roof of the garden shed. The children's play structure was improved with a shade and safety guard on the platform.



Outreach: Julia McLeod was appointed Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator, and worked for the garden on a part time basis between April and October. With her assistance we continued outreach to the community through placing articles in the Anchor, distributing posters, and gathering feedback about community members' interests in the garden through an online survey. Jane Covey was also interviewed for the Forecaster and Anchor. Julia McLeod contacted local churches and initiated relationships with the Harpswell Coastal Academy and Apogee Camp, as well as other community groups and individuals. Julia has contributed significantly to our outreach efforts by increasing the quality and frequency of communications with media, organizations, volunteers and gardeners alike. She distrib-

uted a regular email newsletter and updated the Community Garden page on the Town Website. Her email newsletter went to all volunteers and gardeners to update them on activities, provide gardening information, and recruit volunteers for work days. Julia has developed systems to track volunteer and in-kind contributions accurately and efficiently (although many volunteers forget to log their total time) and to share information electronically. Her contributions established a strong platform for ongoing outreach and communications. Julia's work was essential to the success of our outreach and communications this year.

Gardens/Gardeners: Seventeen gardeners rented 19 plots this year, an increase of about 45% from the 2012 season (11 gardeners/13 plots). Unrented garden plots were planted with onions, tomatoes, peppers, greens and potatoes for the Common Garden (as were pumpkin and potato patches in the Common Garden area). About 35-40% of the total garden area was planted with cover crop. In cooperation with the Maine Harvest for Hunger project, we harvested about 165 pounds of produce and donated the harvest to the Mid-coast Hunger Prevention Center in Brunswick. All seedlings and seeds for this Common Garden were donated by



members of the garden and other individuals and businesses. We organized two potluck dinners for gardeners and volunteers.

Soil and Water Issues: Weather this season was unusually wet. The gardens were adversely affected because we are challenged by poor drainage. This significantly reduced crop yields and discouraged some of our gardeners (some who had to plant twice). We were fortunate to have two expert volunteer on-site consultations (Don Newberg, a Harpswell resident, and Jeff Feaga, a soil scientist working for the Natural Resources Conservation Service). We dug down at least 5 feet and found that the soil is hard packed clay with little drainage capacity. We agreed to address the issue first by raising the garden plots, using soil from the area of the garden that was fallow in 2013, and adding organic matter. Tori Jackson, U Maine Extension Officer, concurred with this strategy and made further suggestions for plot management and soil improvement. If this is not successful in the 2014 growing season, we will need to consider the cost/benefit of other suggested measures, which include a) deep tilling with a 'subsoiler,' b) installing underground drainage in the garden itself, and/or c) deepening the swale drainage.

Orchard: Robert McIntyre planted an additional four heritage apple trees for a total of eight. All are doing well.

Garden Maintenance: A volunteer crew organized by Peg Bonarrigo contributed to the attractiveness of the garden through regular mowing. Volunteers also maintained the paths and weeded common garden areas. Fallow plots were covered with plastic mulch, and large areas were planted with a cover crop. Most gardeners maintained their plots well and contributed to the general upkeep of the garden.



Community Support: While we did not have an explicit goal, we are able to partially support operations through the in-kind and cash contributions of many individuals and organizations from Harpswell and beyond. These contributions are valued at about \$1345 (or about 40% of operating costs) this year, augmenting the funds available from the HHLT grant, and enabling us to operate about \$800 below the grant amount administered by the Town

2013 Goals: \_ Our goals for the year were to:

- *Double the number of volunteers contributing to the community garden to approximately 20-25.* More than 40 individuals volunteered over 350 hours on work at the garden itself. Using the town's valuation of volunteer time at \$17, this amounts to about \$6000. Committee members contributed substantial additional volunteer time in outreach, planning/coordinating and administrative activities.
- *Increase our harvest five-fold to 1000 pounds.* We delivered about 165 pounds. All crops did poorly due to water and soil issues.
- *Develop and implement methods for distributing our harvest to those who cannot access the local food pantry.* Because of the uncertainty of the

harvest we did not actively establish this system.

- *Establish long-term collaboration with at least three community groups who share our goals for enhancing food security and increasing the availability of locally produced organic food.* We established relationships with the Harpswell Coastal Academy, Apogee Camp and Bowdoin College. We will work to continue these collaborations in coming years.

### **Plans for 2014 Garden Program**

Resolving the water issues and improving soil quality are our main priorities for the coming year. We will limit gardening to the rented plots and plant soil improving cover crops on unused plots and fallow areas. In the coming season we do not plan to plant the Common Garden, but rather work to make the garden soil more able to sustain crops.

Gardening: Next growing season will tell us whether raising the soil level and enhancing its organic content will be sufficient to assure a satisfying experience for gardeners and a robust harvest. The gardeners who have already raised their beds have had greater success than those who have not, so we are hopeful that this will solve the inherent problems with the site. A number of gardeners will not be returning next year for a variety of reasons, so we will need to recruit new gardeners if we are to maintain the number achieved this year. We will develop projects and programs with 2014 gardeners (such as seedling sharing, potluck harvest dinners, educational events) depending on their interests. We have had feedback that the standard fees of \$25-\$35 are a barrier for some people, so we are recommending that the Select Board approve a flexible fee schedule.

Volunteers/Outreach: Recruiting and retaining volunteers is essential to the garden's success. We rely on group workdays for peak times and on individual help for ongoing gardening maintenance. Our experience this year suggests that in addition to recruiting teams through organizations (e.g., Apogee, Bowdoin, Harpswell Coastal Academy), we should increase our outreach to individuals through more one-on-one exploration and engagement. We successfully engaged individual volunteers this year when they were clear about what they wanted to do and we could match those interests with our needs.

Over the Winter/early Spring the committee will continue outreach to the community through articles in local papers, presentations to groups, and collaboration with various institutions. For example, The Harpswell Coastal Academy has asked us to meet with students/faculty to continue to explore how we might work together on a long-term basis. In addition to providing volunteers among its students and their families, the Academy has been using the garden as a learning site, bringing students to examine the crops, soil, etc. as part of their educational program. They plan to use a garden plot to grow a garlic crop this fall. We are delighted that the garden and the Academy can mutually benefit one another and hope we will find other areas for mutual support.

We will also continue our efforts to engage Mt. Ararat High School's community service program, and continue to request student volunteers from Bowdoin College and Apogee Camp. We will seek to identify other opportunities as well.

### **Goals for 2014 Season:**

SOIL:

- Test the efficacy of raised garden plots to solve soil/water issues

- Develop and implement a multi-year plan to improve soil quality

#### GARDENERS:

- Welcome returning gardeners and recruit new gardeners to maintain the total number of at least 17
- Support gardeners' interests through a variety of educational and community building activities.

the end of the season. The in-kind contributions of individuals and businesses have provided for basic operations, enabling us to complete our program \$800 under the full grant allowance. In-kind contributions also provided amenities that we could not have afforded otherwise (such as portable irrigation systems that make watering more efficient). Garden plot rental fees and cash donations over the past two years equal \$1030, and are held in a Town account.

#### VOLUNTEERS:

- Build the number of active volunteers by 25% to at least 50 individuals.
- Maintain and strengthen relationships with current collaborating organizations, and add at least one new institutional relationship.
- Increase total volunteer hours by 15% to 400.
- Strengthen our volunteer recognition/appreciation program

Respectfully submitted: Jane Covey,  
On behalf of the Harpswell Garden Committee  
(Peg Bonarrigo, Cyndy Bush, David Chipman, Mary Ann Roark, Wes Wood Members) and  
Julia McLeod, Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator.

#### OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Maintain ongoing communication through articles in local papers, Town web-site, revised brochure, posters, and group meetings.
- Continue to solicit input/feedback, expertise and gifts in kind from individuals, experts, local businesses, and community organizations.

#### **Financial Report:** (Please see the attached page)

This year we have expended just under \$4000 from a proposed budget of \$6300. HHLT administered funds supported Julia McLeod, our part time Outreach & Volunteer Coordinator. Scheduling conflicts meant that she did not work the full hours budgeted between April – October so \$1535 remains in this budget. The Town administered operating budget was \$2698. Savings on the purchase of a riding mower enabled us to purchase compost at

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*Photos: J Covey*

*P 1—David Chipman & Sam Bellows*

*P1—Faye Scheren*

*P2—Harpswell Coastal Academy Parents & Students*

*The Harpswell Community Garden appreciates the contributions of the following people and organizations. During the 2013 Season*

A PARTIAL LISTING OF GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO  
HAVE VOLUNTEERED AT THE HARPSWELL COMMUNITY  
GARDEN

Apogee Camp  
Ben and Sam Below  
Teeter Bibber  
Peg Bonarrigo  
Bowdoin College  
Dave Brown  
Cyndy Bush  
Julia Campbell  
Dave Chipman  
Jane Covey  
Margaret Duffek  
Jeff Feaga  
Susan Gladstein  
Harpswell Coastal Academy  
Nadia and Ed Harris  
Mandi Hawkes  
Jim Henderson  
Tori Lee Jackson  
The Kane Family  
Sharon Kirker  
Nathan and Mark Leach  
The Levy Family  
Gail Malone  
Marnie McFarland  
Robert McIntyre  
Don Newberg  
Mary Ann and Rob Roark  
Faye Scheren  
The Simmons Family  
Judith Stanton  
Paul Weeden  
Ronnie Weston  
Wes Wood

A PARTIAL LISTING OF BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE DONATED MATERIALS,  
SERVICES and FUNDS

Brooks Farm and Feed  
Coyne Landscaping  
Crystal Spring Farm  
Dyers Nursery  
Harpswell Garden Club  
Skillins Nursery  
University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties  
Vail Tree Service  
  
John Boomer  
Cyndy Bush  
David Chipman  
Jane Covey  
Donn Gagnon  
Denis Gagnon  
Jim Henderson  
Alicia Heyburn  
Sharon Kirker  
Robert McIntyre  
Julia McLeod  
Sharon Munier  
Gerry Orem  
Wayne Ricker  
Rob and Mary Ann Roark  
Hank Schwartz and Judith Redwine  
Wes Wood